

I C R A
EDUCATIONAL
SERIES NO. 1

SHIVA'S PLIGHT

A STORY OF A CHILD WORKER



Krishna Setty

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

INTRODUCTION

This comic tells the story of a ten year old boy who comes from his village to the city to work. Around his story a whole range of problems pertaining to a child worker are explored.

Among the instruments of education available to activists, the comic is an unique medium. Serious theoretical writing or any other form of critical writing is limited in its appeal to wide sections of the reading public. Comics serve to immediately draw the attention of readers through their pictorial forms. A willingness is created in the mind of the reader to pursue the story. In such a situation it is possible to allow the story to carry a message to the reader that would otherwise be difficult to communicate.

The visual aspect of the comic also plays a significant role. In looking at a sequence of pictures, the reader searches for an underlying meaning and becomes subjectively involved. The message is there but it can be understood in a number of different ways.

We, at the Institute for Cultural Research and Action (ICRA), have as one of our concerns the problem of child labour. Among the several strategies available to us to mobilise support, the comic is one. A number of individuals, groups and institutions in Asia, Africa and Latin America have been making serious efforts to protect the interests of working children caught in an exploitative web. It is our hope that this comic is a further contribution towards alleviating the plight of child labour.

We would sincerely hope that this comic will be read and used by action groups, trade unions, women's organisations, government bodies and social-action agencies.

The problem of child labour can be looked at from several different stand-points. But whatever be the angle from which one views the problem there can be no disagreement that the oppressed child is in need of urgent attention and support. The problem of child labour must set aside all partisan considerations on the part of concerned individuals and institutions. Unless a unified strategy of action is evolved our efforts may not bear fruit. It is towards this end that this comic must work for the cause of the children.

DEDICATION

In the process of producing this comic, those involved discovered many paradoxes. Perhaps the greatest paradox of all is that the children for whom the comic is intended are often without the ability to read. Therefore we dedicate this comic to the working children of India.

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SHIVA'S PLIGHT

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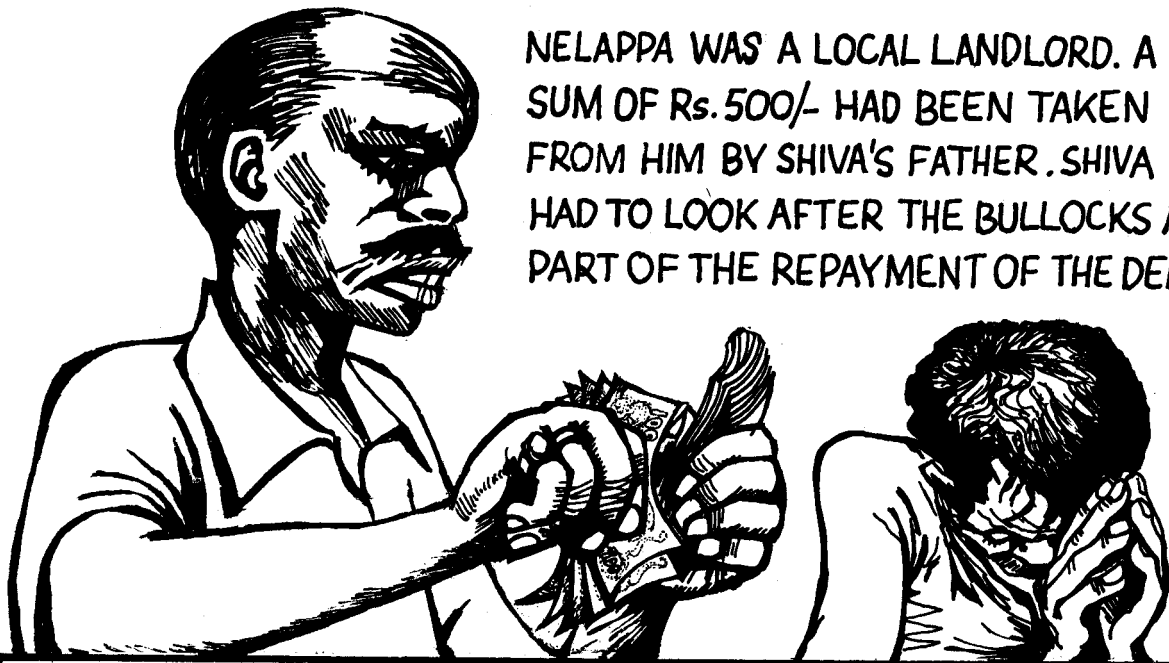
THIS IS THE STORY OF A BOY NAMED SHIVA. SHIVA AND HIS FAMILY LIVED IN A VILLAGE FIVE HOURS AWAY FROM THE NEAREST CITY AND WERE VERY POOR. LIKE MANY OF THE OTHER BOYS WHOSE FAMILIES WERE DEEPLY IN DEBT. SHIVA HAD TO DROP OUT OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND WORK AT HOME. IT WAS A VICIOUS CIRCLE OF POVERTY LEADING TO DEBT, DEBT LEADING TO POVERTY AND SO ON. HIS FAMILY HAD A CONSTANT PROBLEM OF REPAYING LOANS. MONEY WAS ALWAYS NEEDED, FOR BIRTHS, FOR DEATHS, FOR FESTIVALS, MONEY TO SOW THE SEED, MONEY TO REAP THE HARVEST. DEBTS WERE PASSED ON FROM PREVIOUS GENERATIONS AND NEW DEBTS WERE INCURRED.



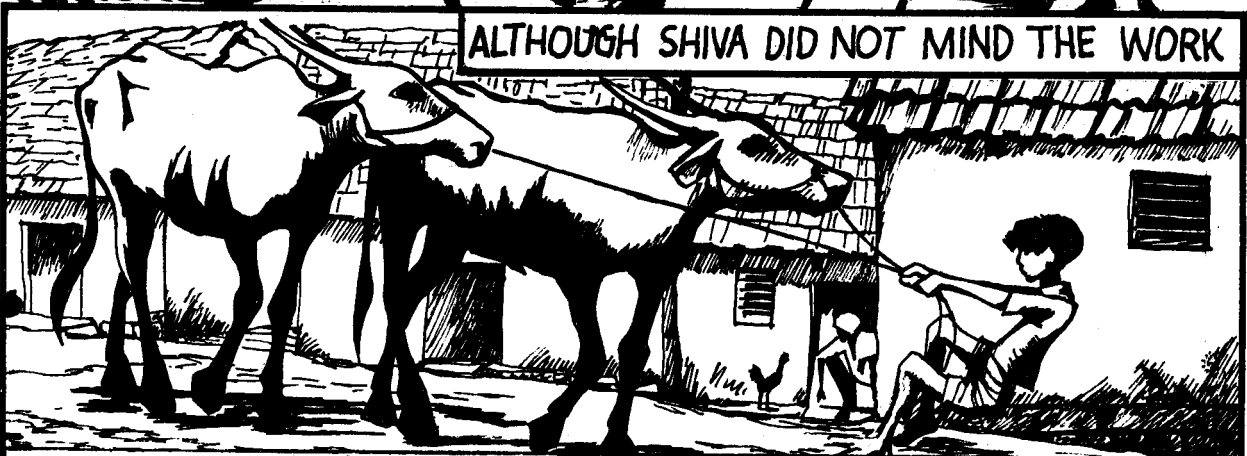
THE EASIEST WAY TO REPAY THESE DEBTS WAS TO SEND THE YOUNG CHILDREN TO WORK, SHIVA WAS ONE SUCH VICTIM, HIS FATE WAS THE CARE OF NELAPPA'S BULLOCKS.



NELAPPA WAS A LOCAL LANDLORD. A SUM OF Rs. 500/- HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM HIM BY SHIVA'S FATHER. SHIVA HAD TO LOOK AFTER THE BULLOCKS AS PART OF THE REPAYMENT OF THE DEBT.



ALTHOUGH SHIVA DID NOT MIND THE WORK



SOME TIMES HE WOULD FEEL VERY BORED. IT WAS A MONOTONOUS JOB AND MISSING HIS SCHOOL EDUCATION HE WAS SOMETIMES AFRAID THAT ONE DAY HE MIGHT GROW UP TO BE A BULLOCK HIMSELF!



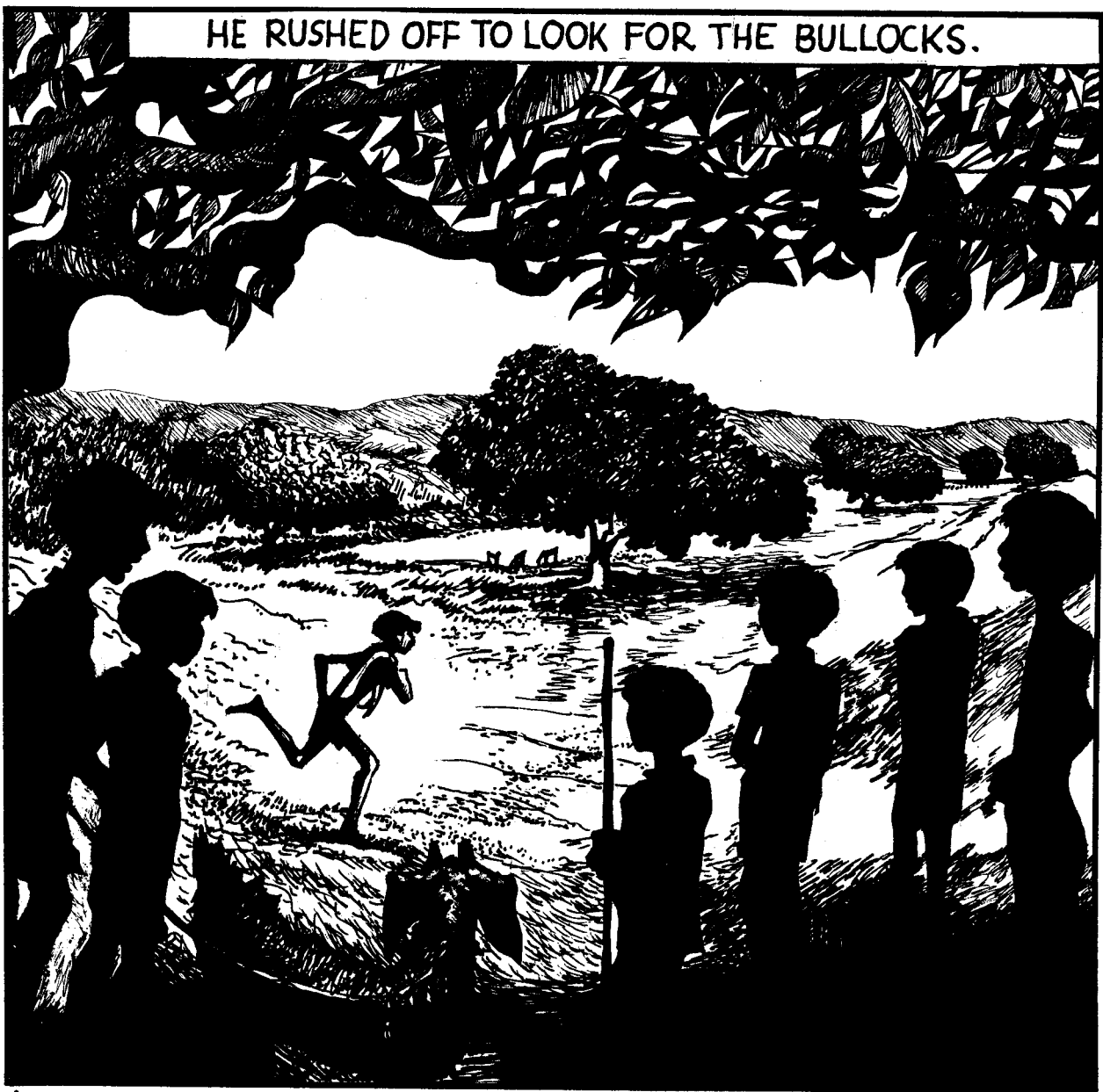
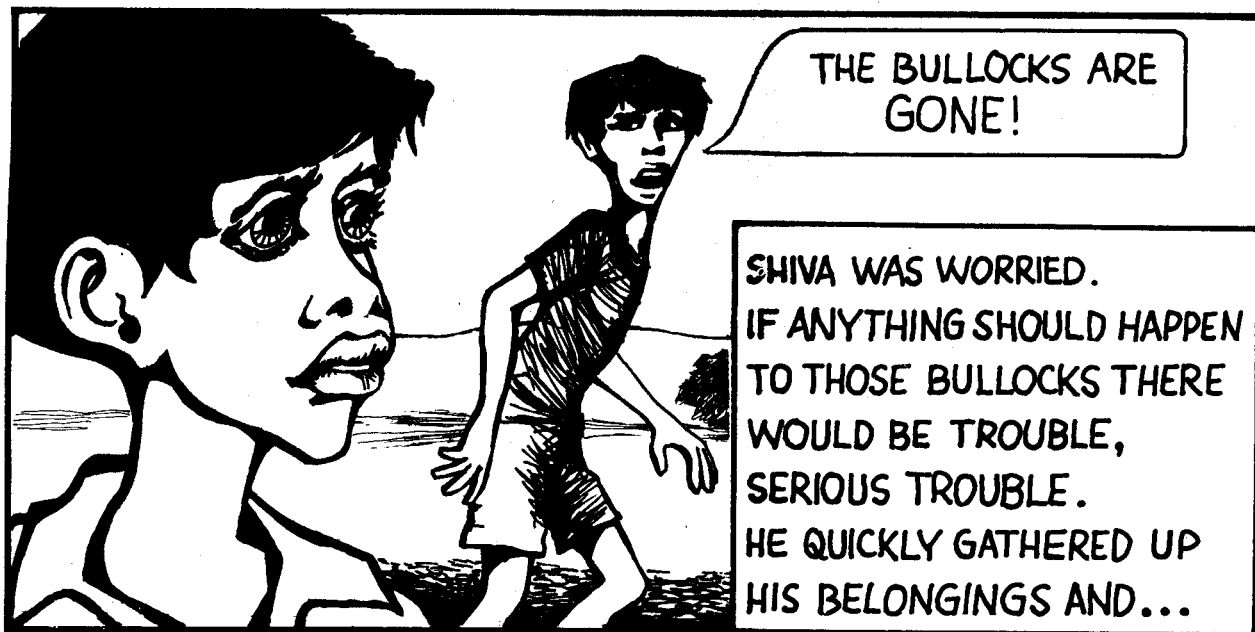
SHIVA WAS AN ALERT, BRIGHT YOUNG BOY AND NEEDED THE COMPANY OF OTHER CHILDREN. OFTEN HE WOULD TAKE THE ANIMALS NEAR THE MANGO TREES WHERE HE COULD MEET HIS FRIENDS AND PASS THE TIME WITH THEM PLAYING.



SHIVA!
SHIVA!
COME
QUICKLY!

ON THIS PARTICULAR DAY SHIVA HAD SPENT THE AFTERNOON PLAYING WITH HIS FRIENDS WHEN SUDDENLY GOPI CAME RUSHING IN.





BUT THE BULLOCKS WERE
NOWHERE IN SIGHT.

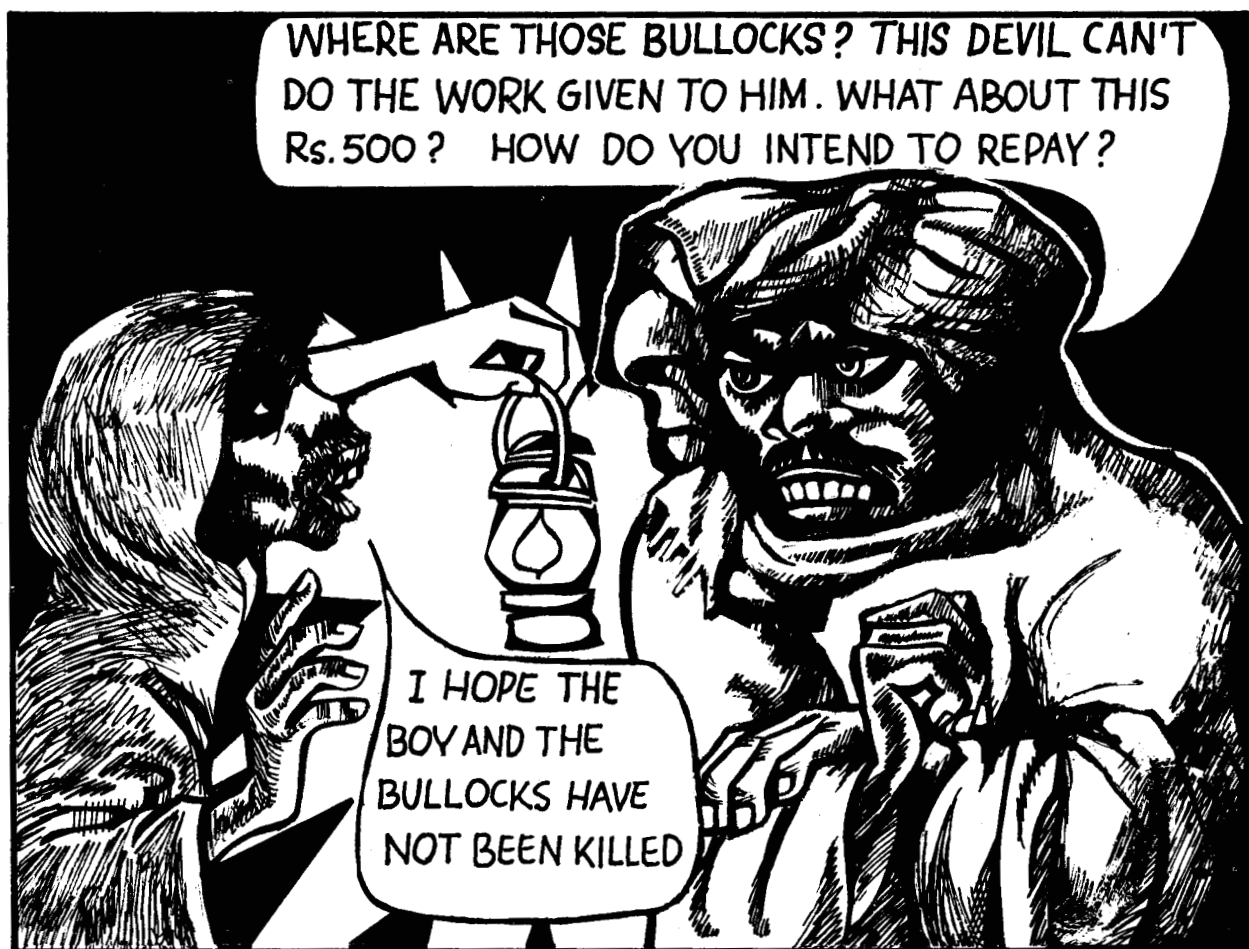
RAMA!
BHIMA!

SHIVA FELT FRIGHTENED OF THE FOREST
AND DECIDED TO TURN BACK.

HE APPROACHED NELAPPA'S HOUSE.

Rs. 3000
THESE BULLOCKS
COST ME!

HE HEARD NELAPPA'S VOICE.





SHIVA ESCAPED



FOR HALF THE NIGHT HE RAN AND STUMBLER.

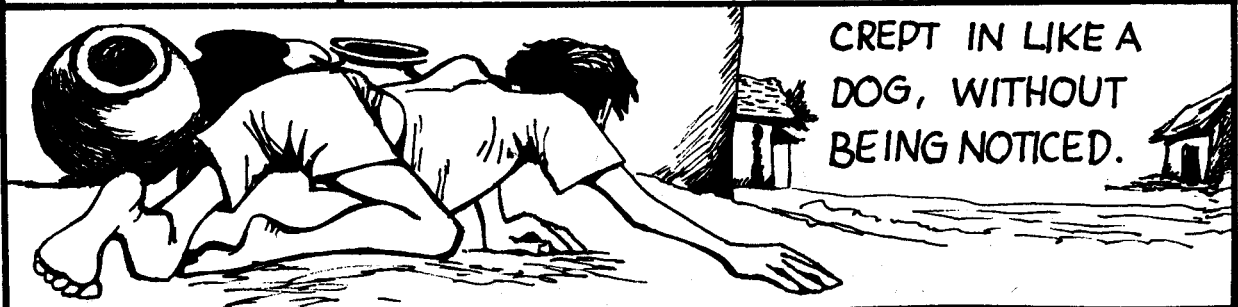
UNTIL HE FELL EXHAUSTED AND SLEPT WHERE HE LAY.



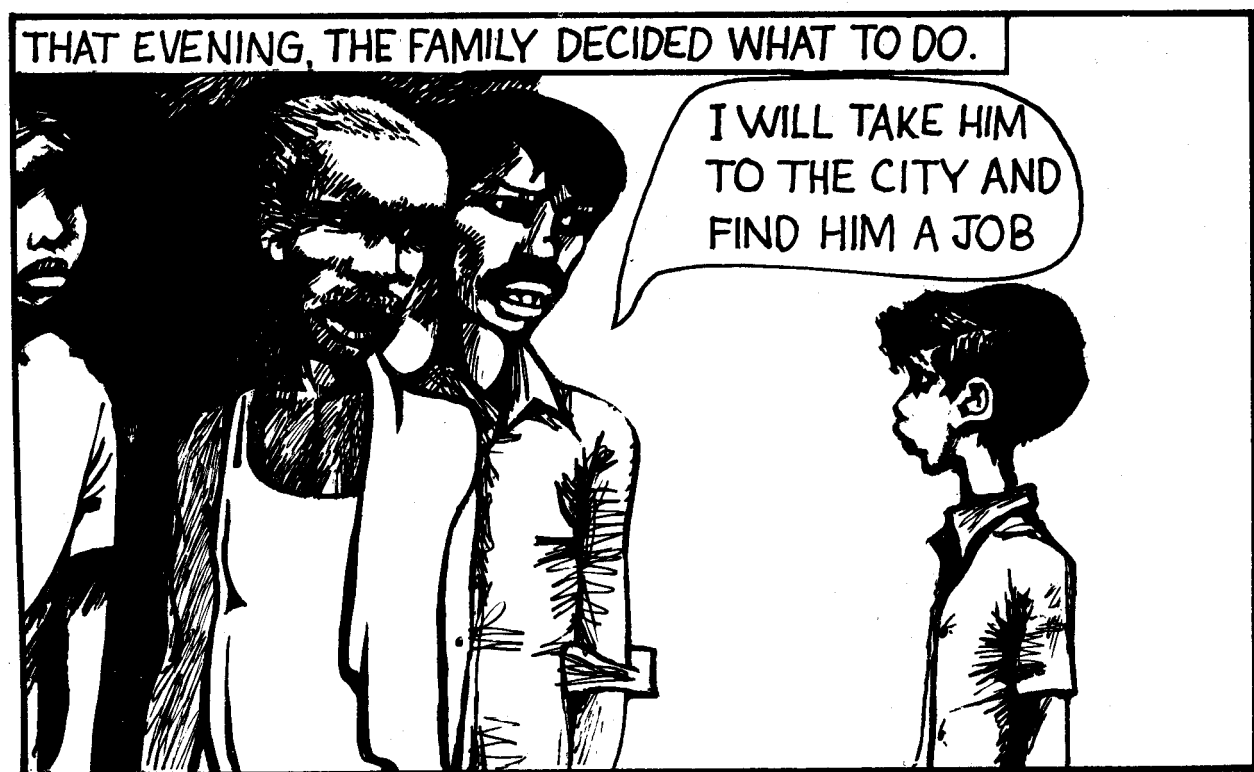
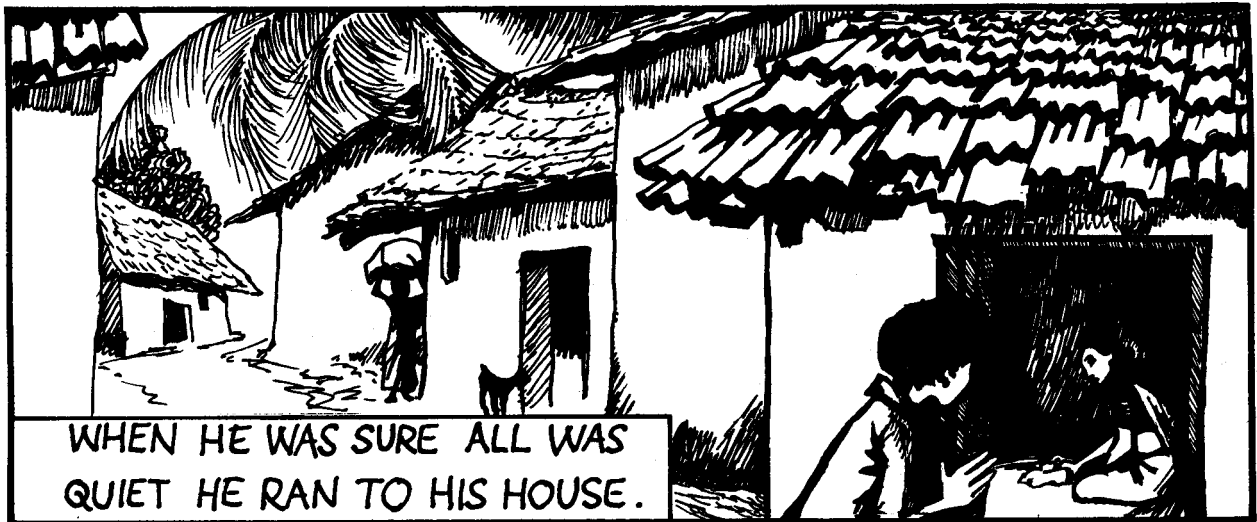
NEXT MORNING



HE WENT BACK TO THE VILLAGE AND



CREPT IN LIKE A
DOG, WITHOUT
BEING NOTICED.



THE NEXT MORNING
SHIVA AND HIS UNCLE
LEFT THE VILLAGE



AT THE LOCAL STATION,
THEY BOARDED THE TRAIN FOR THE
CITY.



FIVE HOURS LATER THEY ARRIVED THERE.





THE HOTEL KITCHEN WAS A TERRIBLE PLACE . THE SMOKE
AND THE SMELL WAS ALMOST TOO MUCH TO BEAR . EVEN
THOUGH SHIVA WAS HUNGRY , HE COULD NOT EAT .



NEVER BEFORE HAD HE WORKED SO HARD AND FOR
SUCH LONG PERIODS . AT THE END OF THE DAY HE WAS
VERY TIRED .





THE NEXT MORNING A STRANGE LOOKING YOUNG MAN DRESSED IN VERY GOOD CLOTHES CAME TO THE HOTEL WITH HIS FRIENDS.



HE WAS GOING TO SEE HIS FUTURE BRIDE AND FELT VERY HAPPY. HE LAUGHED SO MUCH IT SEEMED AS IF THE CORNERS OF HIS MOUTH TOUCHED HIS EARS.

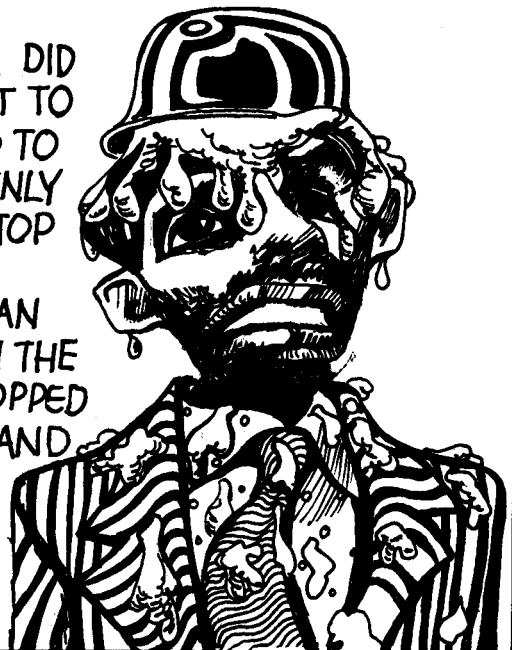


DO YOU THINK THE GIRL WILL LIKE HIM ?

HE LOOKS VERY HANDSOME .



EVERYBODY WAS LAUGHING. SHIVA DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO. HE WANTED TO LAUGH TOO. SUDDENLY HE COULD NOT STOP HIMSELF ANY LONGER. HE BEGAN TO LAUGH AND IN THE PROCESS HE DROPPED ALL THE PLATES AND DISHES. THEY LANDED ON THE 'HANDSOME' MAN.



KRISHNA GRABBED SHIVA AND DRAGGED HIM TO THE KITCHEN.



KRISHNA LOST HIS
SENSES AND BEAT THE
BOY MERCILESSLY

THAT NIGHT SHIVA FELT
DESPERATELY LONELY.



THE SMELL AND THE
MOSQUITOES WERE AWFUL.



HE TRIED TO GET OUT



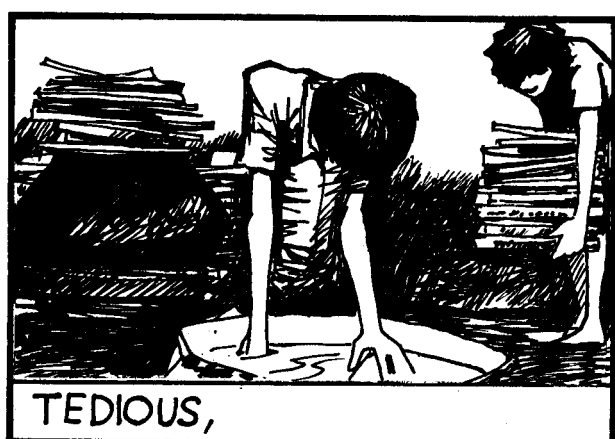
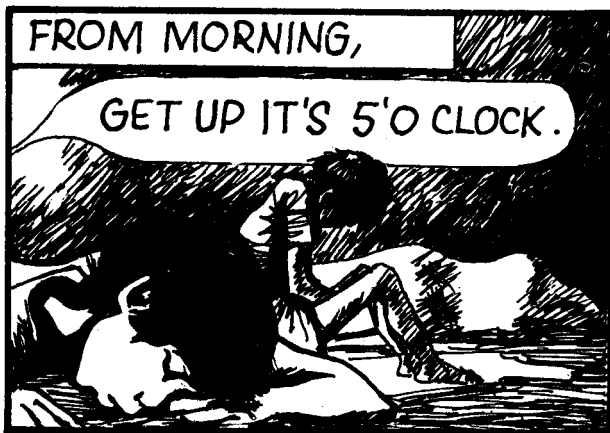
BUT KRISHNA CAUGHT HIM.



**DON'T THINK
YOU CAN WALK
OUT ON THIS!
YOUR UNCLE
HAS TAKEN
Rs. 700
ADVANCE
FROM ME!**



SHIVA WAS PUSHED INSIDE AND KRISHNA BOLTED THE DOOR. SHIVA LAY STILL ON THE FLOOR WHILE KRISHNA CONTINUED TO SHOUT. THE OTHER WORKERS ALSO LAY STILL, FRIGHTENED OF KRISHNA'S ANGER. ALMOST ALL OF THEM WERE UNDER THE AGE OF TWENTY AND MOST OF THEM WERE SHIVA'S AGE—TEN YEARS.



THERE WAS AN OLDER MAN
WORKING
THERE.



HIS NAME WAS APPANNA
HE WAS 40 YEARS OLD.



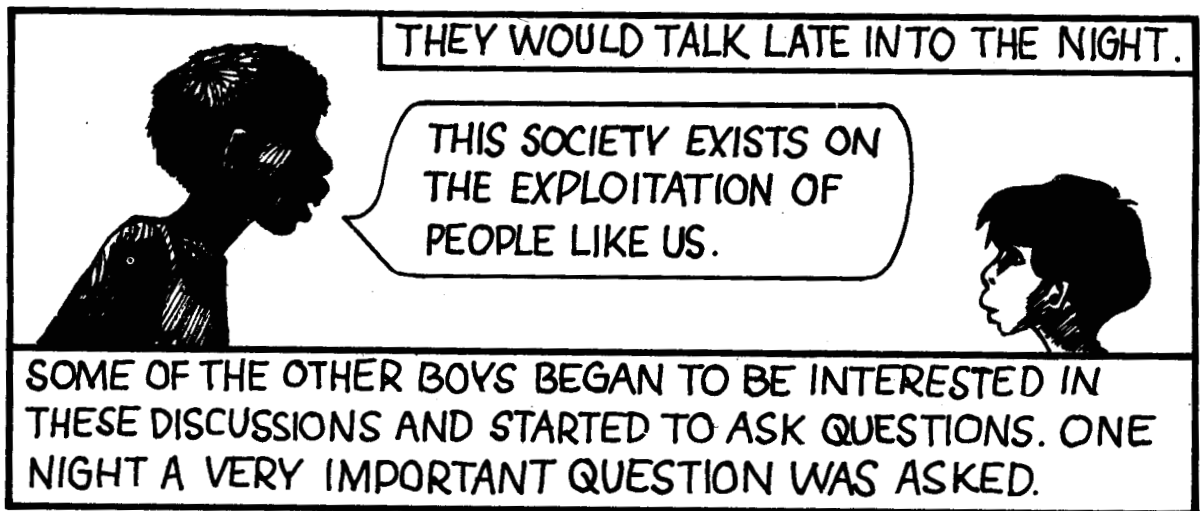
HE WAS ABUSED BY
EVERYBODY.



BUT HE DIDN'T CARE.



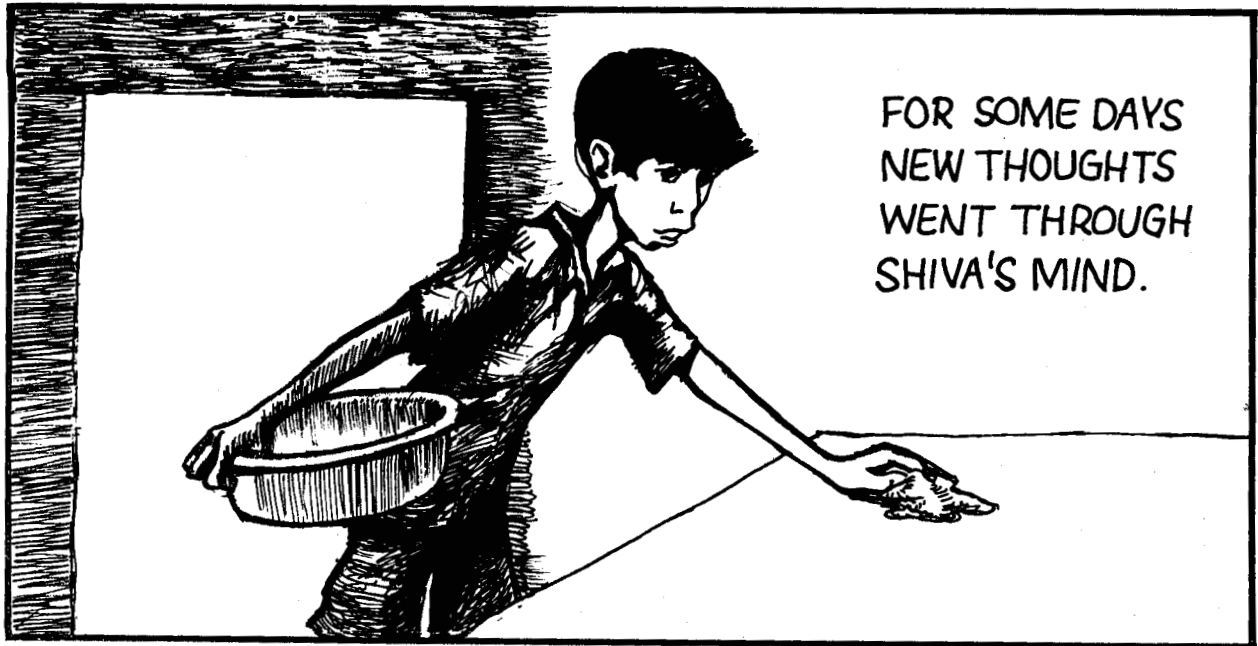
IN THE NIGHT, APPANNA CAME ALIVE. HE READ THE NEWSPAPERS
ALOUD, SO SHIVA BEGAN FOR THE FIRST TIME TO LEARN ABOUT
THINGS IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD. ONE NIGHT HE READ ABOUT A
HUGE PROCESSION OF WORKING CHILDREN IN MEXICO... ..



APPANNA TOLD THEM THEY MUST ALL THINK ABOUT IT.



APPANNA REMAINED SILENT... ..



ONE DAY HE WATCHED THE SCHOOLCHILDREN GO PAST THE HOTEL. HE LOOKED AT THEIR BOOKS, HE LOOKED AT THEIR CLOTHES, HE LOOKED AT HIMSELF. COULD HE GO TO SCHOOL LIKE THEM? A MYSTERIOUS PAIN SWELLED IN HIS HEART.



THAT NIGHT SHIVA LAY ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR . HE HAD A DREAM . HE SAW HIMSELF IN A HUGE PROCESSION OF WORKING CHILDREN SHOUTING SLOGANS AND FIGHTING FOR THEIR RIGHTS .





FACTS ABOUT CHILD LABOUR

WHAT IS CHILD LABOUR?

A child labourer is a person in the age group 5-14, employed for hire or reward, on a full-time or part-time basis and includes a self-employed child and a child assisting his/her parents in their occupations for two or more hours a day.

The International Labour Organisation estimates that 75 million children between the age of 8 and 15 work in the labour forces of the developing countries. In India alone it is estimated that nearly 16.3 million children are employed in various industries such as matches, crackers, construction, hotels, agriculture, beedies and some of the lowly and poorly paid small-scale industries.

IS IT LEGAL?

The Constitution of India prohibits employment of children below 14 years. Article 24 of the India Constitution lays down that 'No child below the age of 14 shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment?' Article 39(f) also stipulates that children must be protected against exploitation, moral and material abandonment. The Directive Principles of the State Policy provide for compulsory education to children upto the age of 14 and requires the state governments to make necessary arrangements. To give effect to these constitutional provisions, the Governments in India have enacted a large number of legislations preventing the employment of children.

THEN WHY DOES CHILD LABOUR EXIST?

Child labour in India continues to exist because of the demand and supply for child labour. The poverty situation of the family, the absence of earning members, the desire of the parents, the lack of schooling facilities, the neighbourhood, the peer group, all contribute to the steady supply of child labour. The low or no wages, which helps the employers to reduce the labour costs, the obedience of the child and his productivity all motivate the employers to continue to employ the children. Both the supply and demand for child labour operate in a vicious circle, making it extremely difficult to tackle this problem.

CAN THIS CHILD BE PROTECTED?

Since the experience over years in regulating child labour has been far from satisfactory and the regulation has been evasive in the context of widespread poverty, adult unemployment, lack of educational facilities, the more practical way of tackling the problem is to regulate the employment and working of the children instead of seeking to prevent or ban child labour.

IS THERE ANY ANSWER TO THIS PROBLEM?

A law should be enacted making provision for the employment of children, regulation of their working hours and wages. More importantly, this law should provide for the education and training of the working children, so as to help them to prepare themselves for a better career. To facilitate this, the employers should be made to contribute towards a fund to provide for education and training of the children in different trades and vocations. In matters of education and training of the working children, the voluntary agencies could take up the major responsibilities.

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ONE DAY A NEW BOY NAMED MUDDA CAME TO WORK. HE WAS ONLY SIX YEARS OLD.



HIS FATHER DISCUSSED THE WAGES FOR THE BOY.



MUDDA FOUND THE WORK TOO HARD.
AT FIRST HE TRIED TO HIDE, BUT
KRISHNA FOUND HIM.



MUDDA WAS VERY FRIGHTENED.

YOU LAZY LITTLE
DEVIL! GET ON
WITH YOUR WORK!



SHIVA TRIED TO COMFORT
MUDDA AND BE HIS FRIEND

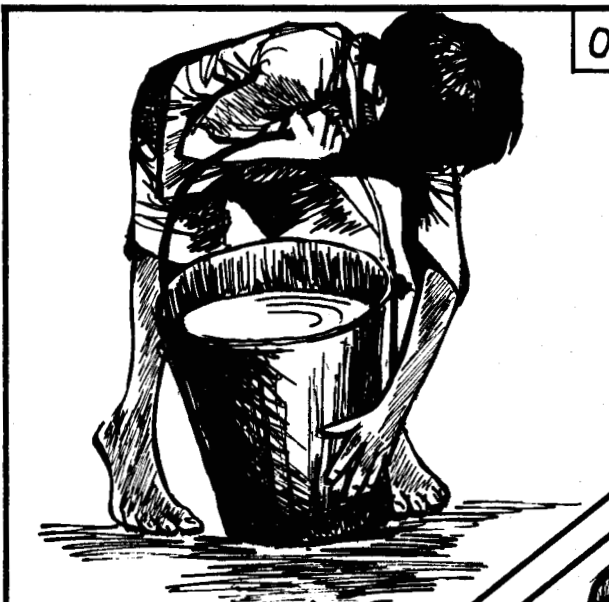
MUDDA WAS FORCED TO WORK AT THE PACE OF THE OLDER BOYS,
UNDER THE THREAT OF KRISHNA.



HE DID HIS BEST TO KEEP UP



AND HE DID WHAT HE COULD.



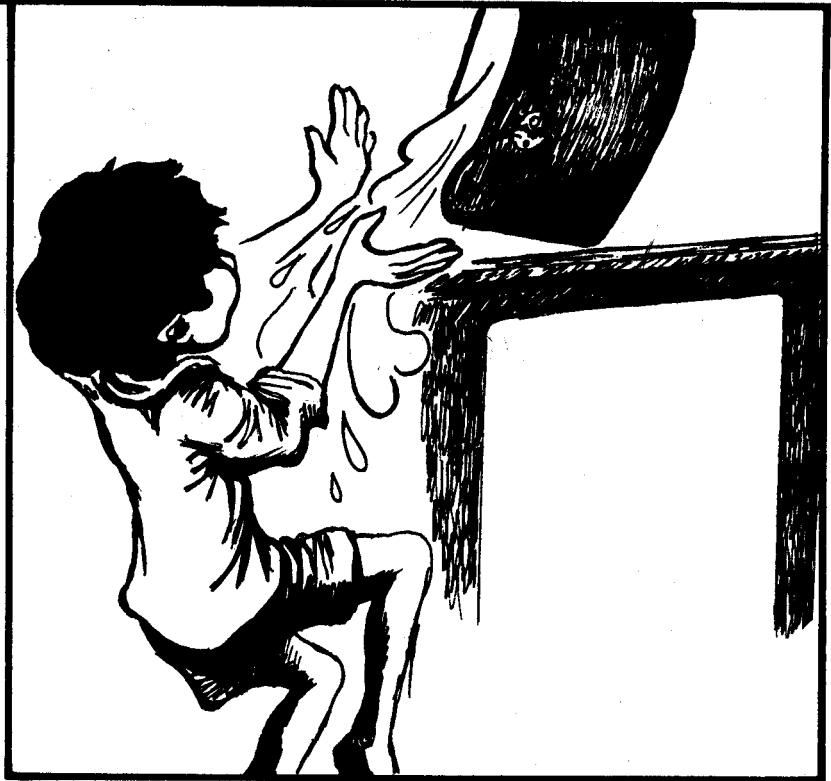
OFTEN HE WAS VERY TIRED, SO



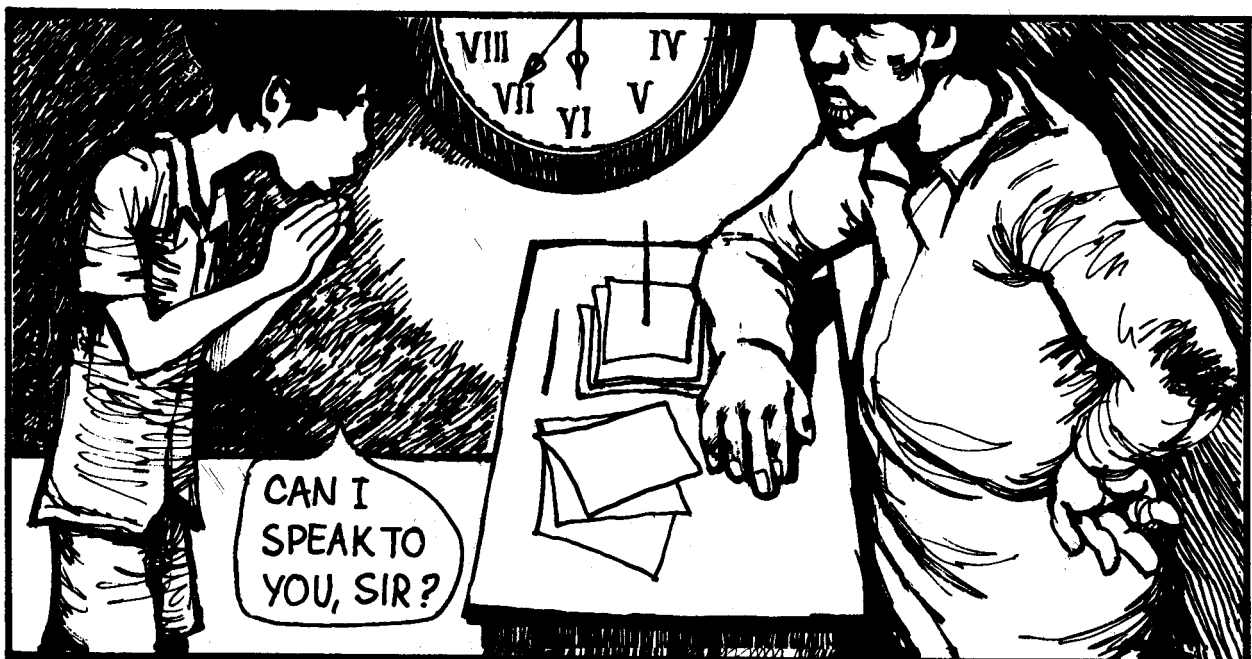
ACCIDENTS TOOK PLACE AND THAT ONLY MADE MORE WORK.



ONE DAY MUDDA HAD
A BAD ACCIDENT WITH
SOME BOILING TEA.
HE WAS BADLY BURNT.



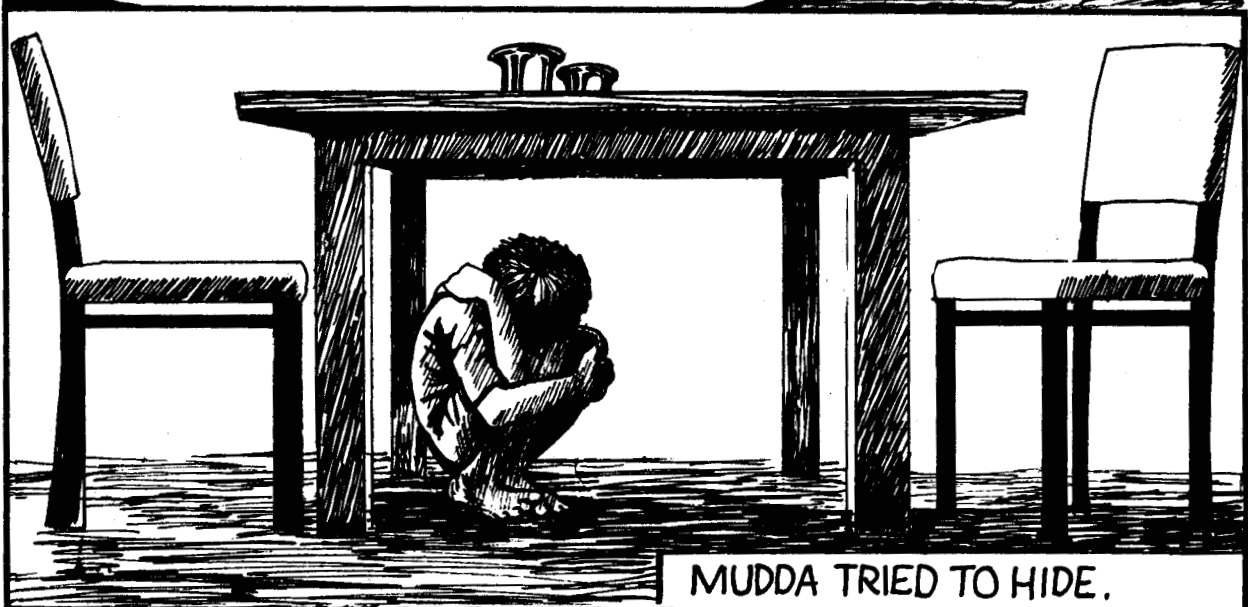
MUDDA WAS IN GREAT PAIN AND REQUIRED
URGENT MEDICAL CARE. NO ONE WAS BRAVE
ENOUGH TO APPROACH KRISHNA, WHO WAS VERY
ANGRY ABOUT THE ACCIDENT, CLAIMING THAT THE
SPILT TEA COST MONEY. SHIVA DECIDED THAT
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM HE MUST
ASK KRISHNA TO SEND MUDDA TO THE DOCTOR.



SEND MUDDA TO THE DOCTOR??
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!!
GET OUT OF HERE NOW!



IF YOU MENTION
THIS AGAIN
I WILL CUT YOUR
TONGUE!
NOW BRING THAT
DOG MUDDA TO ME
IMMEDIATELY!



MUDDA TRIED TO HIDE.

BUT
KRISHNA
FOUND HIM.

**YOU
BASTARD!**



**ALREADY YOU
HAVE CAUSED ME
TROUBLE AND
EXPENSE WITH
YOUR FOOLISH
ACCIDENTS**



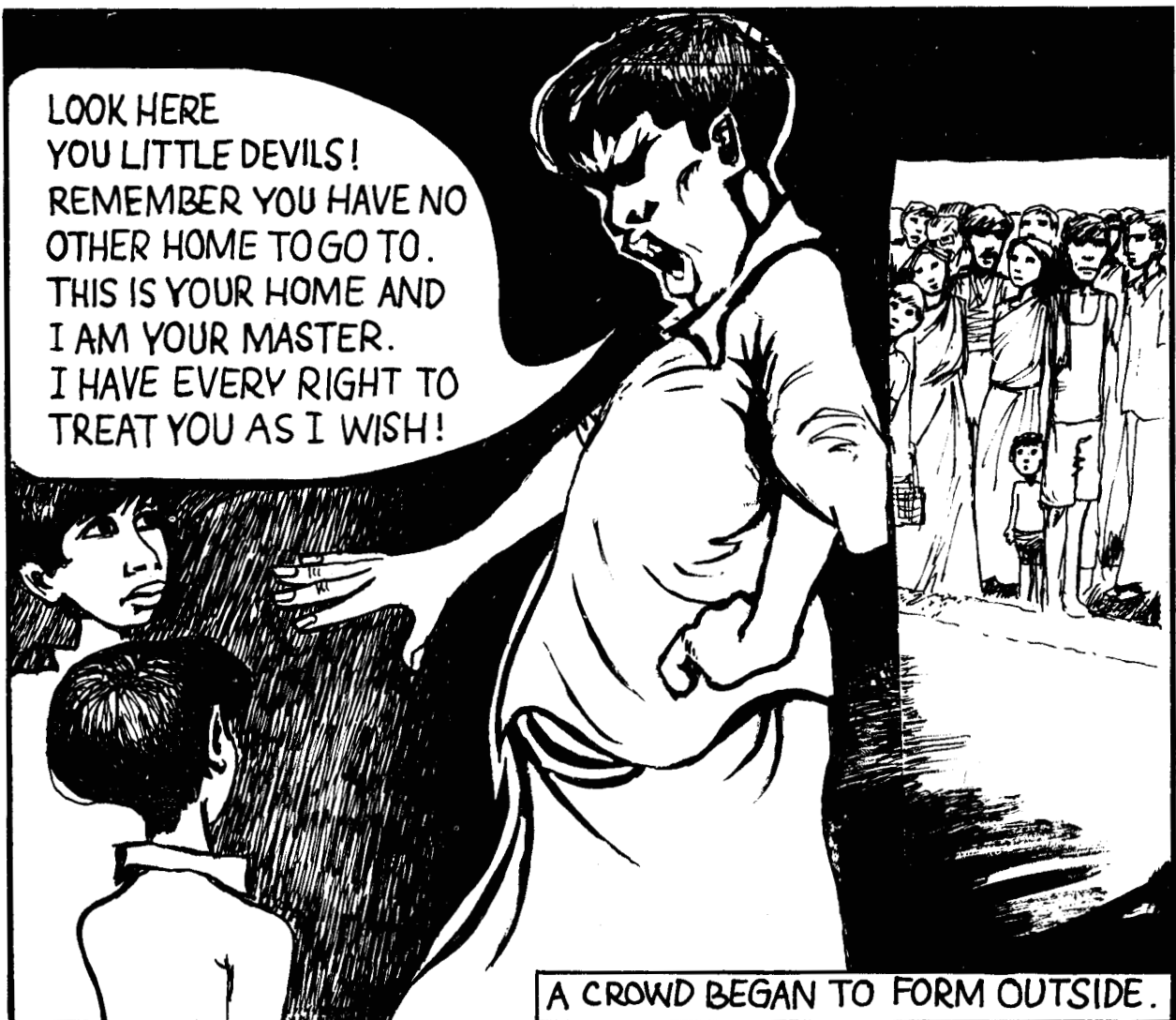
**THESE EXPENSES
WILL HAVE TO BE
PAID. ANY EXTRA COSTS
FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT
WILL BE ADDED TO
YOUR FATHER'S
DEBT!**



SHIVA SHOUTED AT KRISHNA.

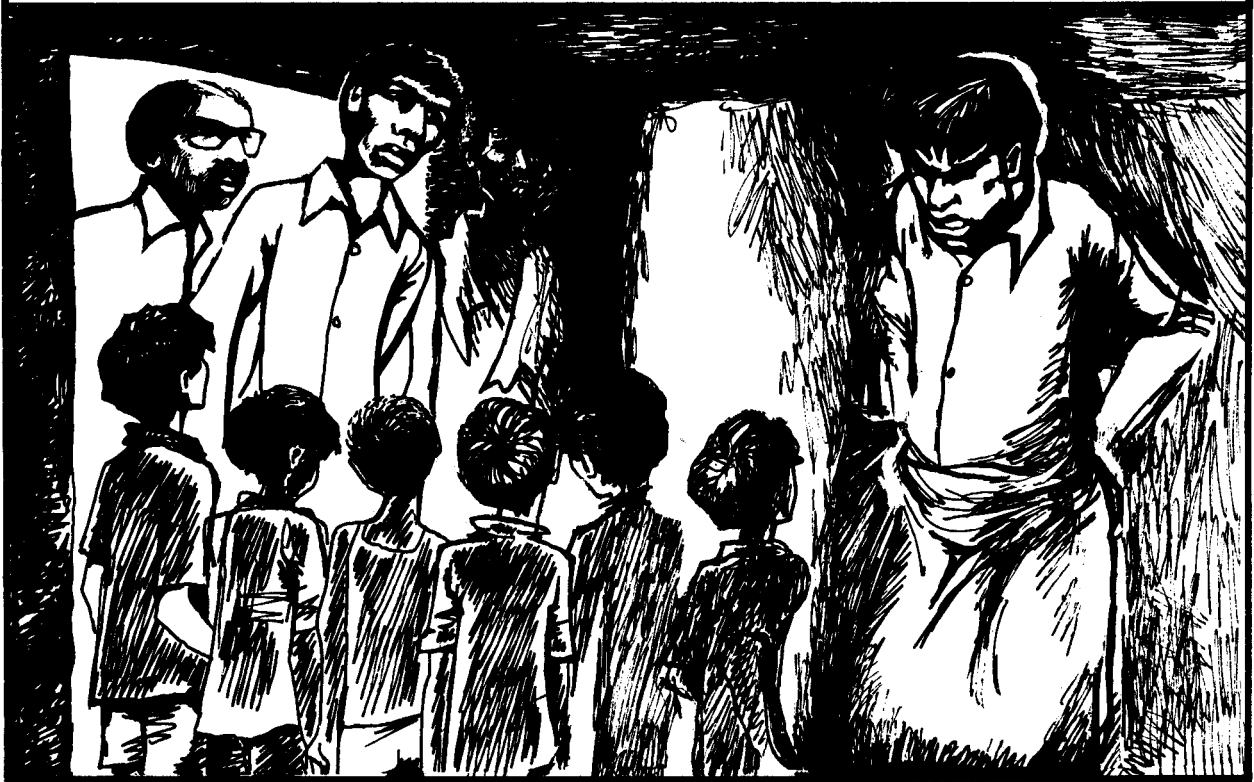


LOOK HERE
YOU LITTLE DEVILS!
REMEMBER YOU HAVE NO
OTHER HOME TO GO TO.
THIS IS YOUR HOME AND
I AM YOUR MASTER.
I HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO
TREAT YOU AS I WISH!



A CROWD BEGAN TO FORM OUTSIDE.

TWO MEN STEPPED IN AND STOPPED THE TROUBLE.



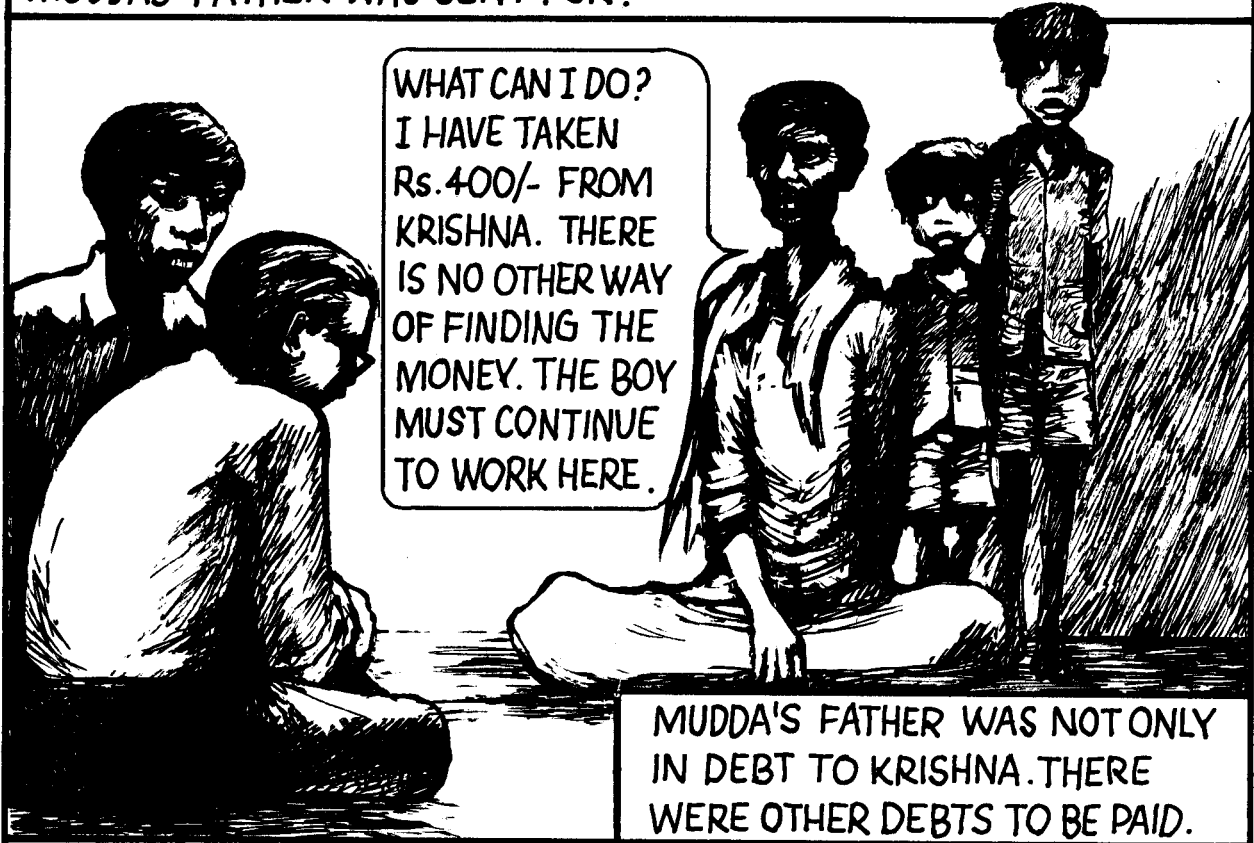
AND A DISCUSSION TOOK PLACE
BETWEEN THE MEN AND KRISHNA.

YOU MUST SEND THE
BOY MUDDA HOME

NOT POSSIBLE
HIS FATHER
WOULD NOT
AGREE TO THAT.

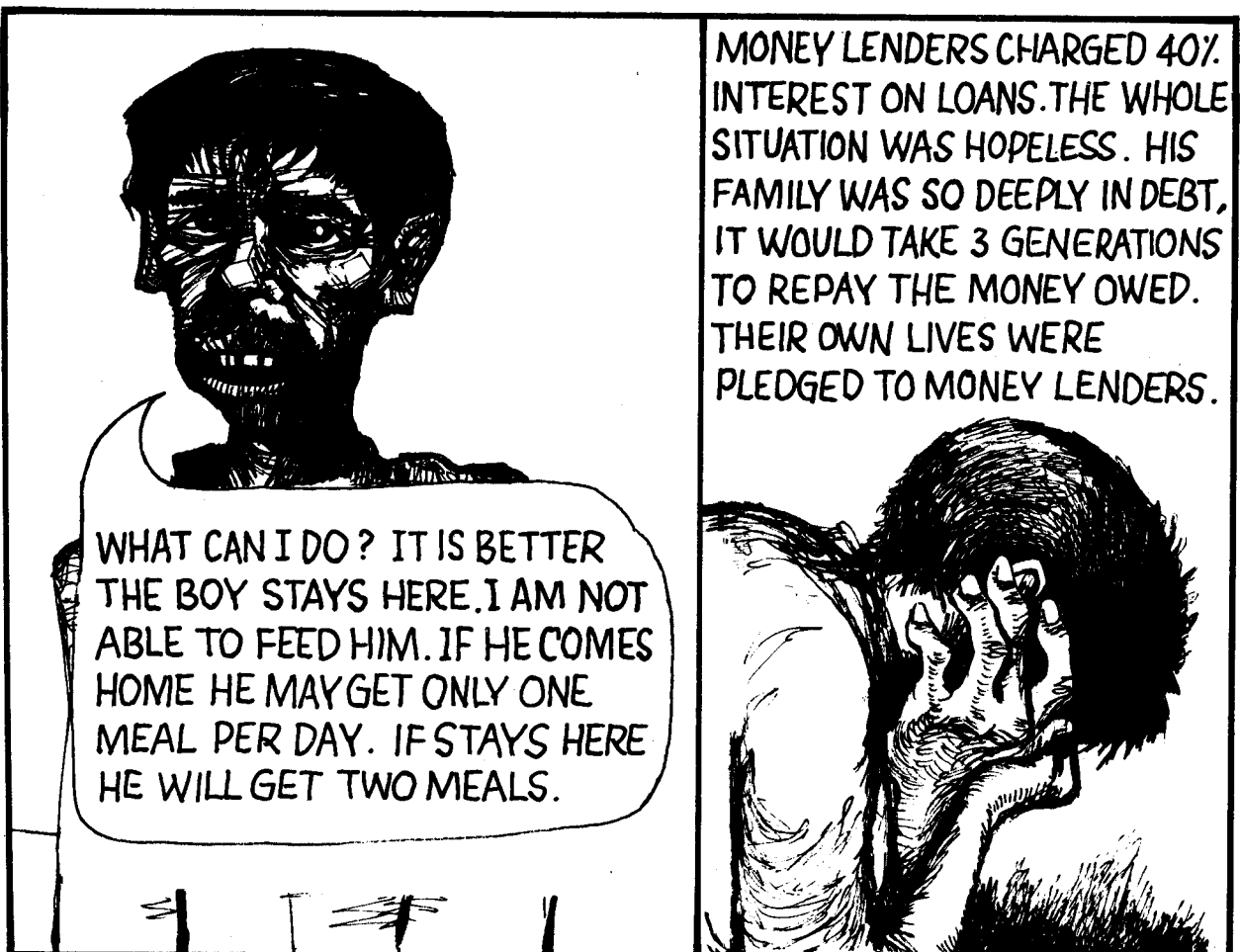


MUDDA'S FATHER WAS SENT FOR.



WHAT CAN I DO?
I HAVE TAKEN
RS.400/- FROM
KRISHNA. THERE
IS NO OTHER WAY
OF FINDING THE
MONEY. THE BOY
MUST CONTINUE
TO WORK HERE.

MUDDA'S FATHER WAS NOT ONLY
IN DEBT TO KRISHNA. THERE
WERE OTHER DEBTS TO BE PAID.



WHAT CAN I DO? IT IS BETTER
THE BOY STAYS HERE. I AM NOT
ABLE TO FEED HIM. IF HE COMES
HOME HE MAY GET ONLY ONE
MEAL PER DAY. IF STAYS HERE
HE WILL GET TWO MEALS.

MONEY LENDERS CHARGED 40%
INTEREST ON LOANS. THE WHOLE
SITUATION WAS HOPELESS. HIS
FAMILY WAS SO DEEPLY IN DEBT,
IT WOULD TAKE 3 GENERATIONS
TO REPAY THE MONEY OWED.
THEIR OWN LIVES WERE
PLEGGED TO MONEY LENDERS.





WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS.
THE LAW STATES THAT NO CHILD UNDER
THE AGE OF 14 YEARS SHOULD BE EMPLOYED,
OR FORCED TO WORK. SURELY WE COULD
FIND THEM SOME OTHER EMPLOYMENT?



FIND OTHER EMPLOYMENT?

IT'S THE SAME EXPLOITATIVE SITUATION EVERYWHERE,
FACTORIES, TEA SHOPS, MECHANIC SHOPS, MILLS, IN THE
CITY AND IN THE VILLAGES, CHILDREN ARE USED AS SLAVES
AND ARE MADE TO WORK TO PAY OFF THEIR FAMILY
DEBTS. THE MONEY THEY EARN IS A PITTANCE
AND THE CONDITIONS THEY WORK IN ARE OFTEN
WORSE THAN AT THIS PLACE.

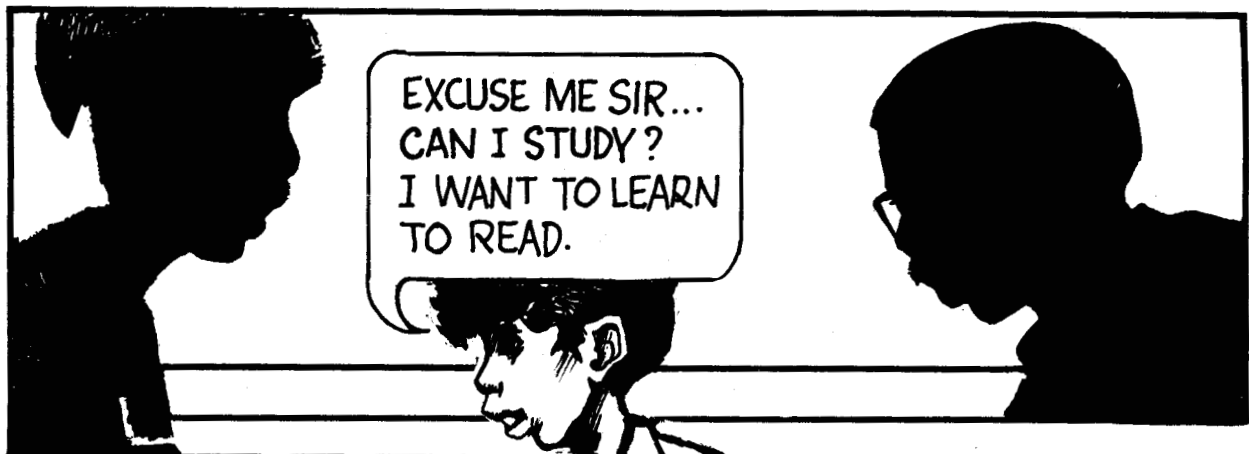


BUT WHAT ABOUT THE LAW?
AND THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT?
THEY WOULD DO SOMETHING!

LAW? LABOUR DEPARTMENT?
WHAT HAVE THEY EVER DONE?

YES, PROSECUTION IS POSSIBLE
BUT IS IT THE ANSWER? WE COULD FIGHT TO
GET THIS PLACE CLOSED BUT WHAT WOULD BE
THE USE OF THAT? MUDDA AND ALL THE
OTHER BOYS WOULD BE WITHOUT FOOD
AND SHELTER IF THE HOTEL WAS CLOSED.
THE BOYS ARE BETTER OFF WHERE THEY ARE.





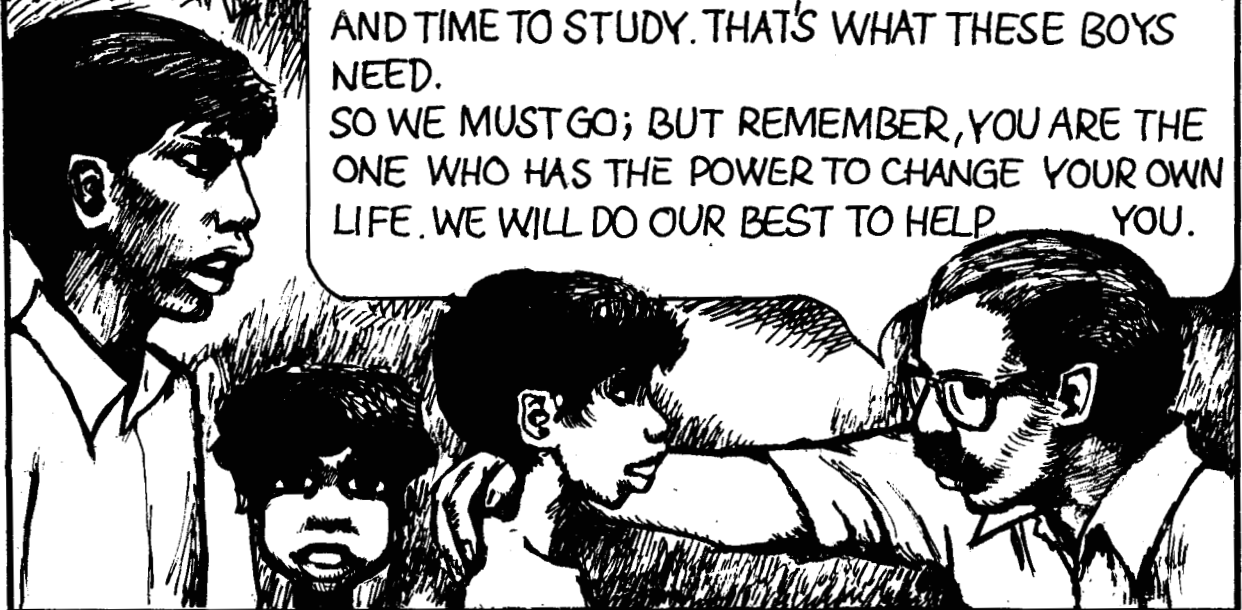
WE COULD APPROACH KRISHNA, BUT WHAT WOULD BE THE USE OF THAT? NO, WE MUST DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT. WHAT ABOUT THAT RETIRED TEACHER IN OUR STREET? THESE BOYS NEED TIME TO STUDY. WE MUST TRY TO ARRANGE IT.



EDUCATION COULD BE THE ANSWER IN THE LONG TERM. IF THESE BOYS RECEIVED THE RIGHT KIND OF EDUCATION THERE IS A CHANCE THAT THEY MIGHT SEE THEIR OWN POSITION MORE CLEARLY AND FREE THEMSELVES FROM THE IGNORANCE OF THESE CONDITIONS. WE MUST DO SOMETHING OURSELVES TO BRING ABOUT CHANGES.

REASONABLE WAGES, BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS, AND TIME TO STUDY. THAT'S WHAT THESE BOYS NEED.

SO WE MUST GO; BUT REMEMBER, YOU ARE THE ONE WHO HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE YOUR OWN LIFE. WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO HELP YOU.



THAT NIGHT IT WAS LATE BEFORE THE BOYS WENT TO SLEEP.

DO YOU THINK THE MEN
WILL COME BACK?

WE SHALL
SEE



NEXT DAY SHIVA WENT ON WITH HIS WORK AS USUAL.



THEN MUDDA GAVE HIM SOME GOOD NEWS.



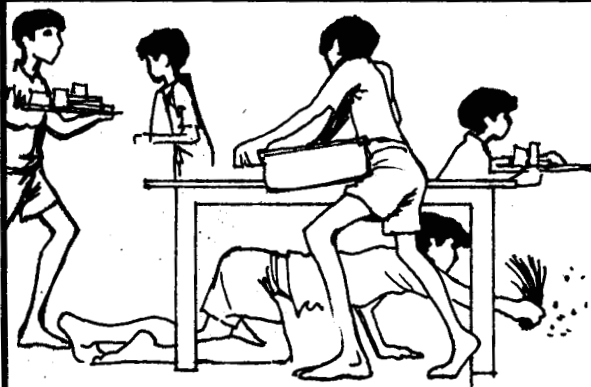
LOOK SHIVA!
THE MEN ARE
HERE!

SHIVA WENT TO THEIR TABLE.



WHY ARE YOU SO SURPRISED TO SEE US?
WE INTEND COMING HERE TO TAKE LUNCH
EVERY DAY FROM NOW ON.

THE BOYS RUSHED OFF TO DO THEIR WORK, WATCHED BY KRISHNA



WHAT IS THIS?
SOME THING HAS HAPPENED
TO THESE LITTLE DEVILS.
I HAVE NEVER SEEN THEM
WORK LIKE THIS BEFORE.
THESE MEN HAVE SOME
INFLUENCE OVER THEM
WHICH I DO NOT HAVE.
PERHAPS THERE WOULD BE
SOMETHING TO BE GAINED
FROM FURTHER DISCUSSION
WITH THEM.



KRISHNA FOUND HIMSELF
BEGINNING TO THINK ABOUT
THINGS HE HAD NEVER
CONSIDERED BEFORE.

SHIVA WENT ON WITH HIS WORK. USUALLY HE DIDN'T CARE FOR THIS JOB. BUT NOW IT SEEMED DIFFERENT SOMEHOW. NEVER BEFORE HAD HE WORKED WITH SUCH ENTHUSIASM. HE WANTED TO DO HIS JOB PROPERLY AND HE FOUND NEW STRENGTH WITHIN HIMSELF, KNOWING THAT THE TWO MEN WOULD BE SUPPORTING HIM IN HIS EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT CHANGES. TODAY HE HAD A DREAM. IN HIS FUTURE LAY THE POSSIBILITY OF REASONABLE WAGES, BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS AND TIME TO STUDY. BUT ABOVE ALL IN HIS FUTURE THERE WAS HOPE.



...AND IT WAS NOT JUST A DREAM, THE MEN WERE THERE IN THE HOTEL, TAKING LUNCH AND BEING SERVED BY HIMSELF AND HIS COMPANIONS.

ALL THE BOYS FELT A SENSE OF EXCITEMENT AS THEY LOOKED FORWARD INTO THEIR FUTURE. ANTICIPATING THEIR STRUGGLE AND THEIR OWN ACTIONS; WHICH, WITH THE HELP OF THEIR TWO NEW FRIENDS, WOULD BEGIN TO TURN THAT DREAM INTO A REALITY.

HOW TO USE THIS COMIC

- * Give this comic to some employers of children that you know and see if you can improve the existing work conditions
- * Conduct reading circles with working children followed by discussion on what they would like to do about their condition
- * Conduct reading circles with parents of working children to make them aware of their child's situation
- * Give this comic to your local member of the assembly or local member of parliament and ask him what he can do to help

HOW TO ORGANISE AROUND THE COMIC

- * Form a forum of working children in your area and discuss with them possible strategies of action
- * Use this forum to conduct evening classes of basic education and vocational training
- * Find a way to encourage sports and recreation
- * If possible use the forum to encourage the children to express themselves through painting, drama and puppets about their situation and possible action

WAS THIS COMIC USEFUL

- * For your own information?
- * For the children you work with?
- * Any other way?

COMMENT ON OR SUGGEST CHANGES YOU WOULD LIKE MADE FOR A FUTURE EDITION

- * In the script
- * In the illustrations
- * In the information and statistics

SEND YOUR COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS AND WRITE FOR COPIES TO

I C R A (Comic Section)

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